

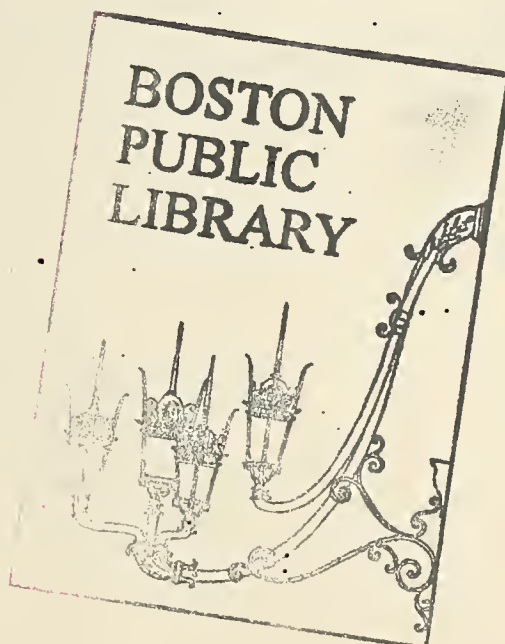
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STAFF DRAFT  
FOR  
REVIEW ONLY

ALLSTON-BRIGHTON

PROFILE  
ISSUES  
STRATEGIES



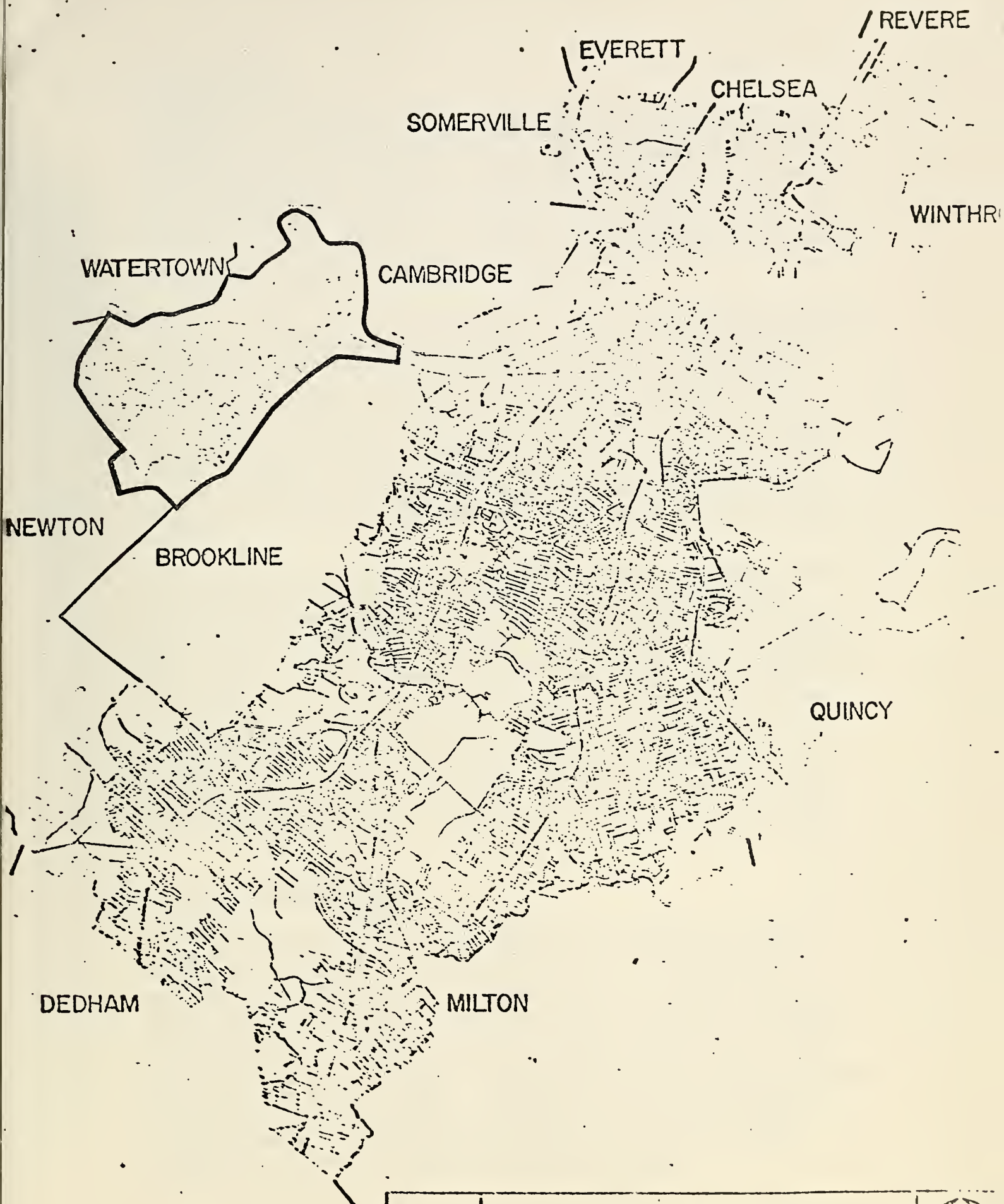
SPRING, 1975



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LOCATION MAP





## A. SHORT HISTORY

Settlement in Allston-Brighton began in 1635 when the area was opened to land grant settlers. Agriculture was the economic mainstay and the Brighton stockyards became the foremost cattle market in the region. A pattern of sparsely settled agricultural land prevailed until the filling of Back Bay and Kenmore Square in the late 1800's. At that time, the extension of street car lines encouraged fine residential development in the district. The southern and western portions of Allston Brighton have retained their predominantly residential character to this day.

However, in the northern and eastern sections, the proximity to the Charles River and to the Boston and Albany Railroad encouraged the construction of the stockyards, slaughterhouses and meatpacking operations. As the nation expanded westward and refrigerated railroad cars were introduced, the Brighton stockyards declined in importance. The yards and ancillary facilities were replaced by other industrial plants, commercial warehouses, and in some cases houses. Settlement was unplanned and as a consequence housing, commercial and industrial uses were intermingled causing a confusing and blighted environment that still exists in some sections today.

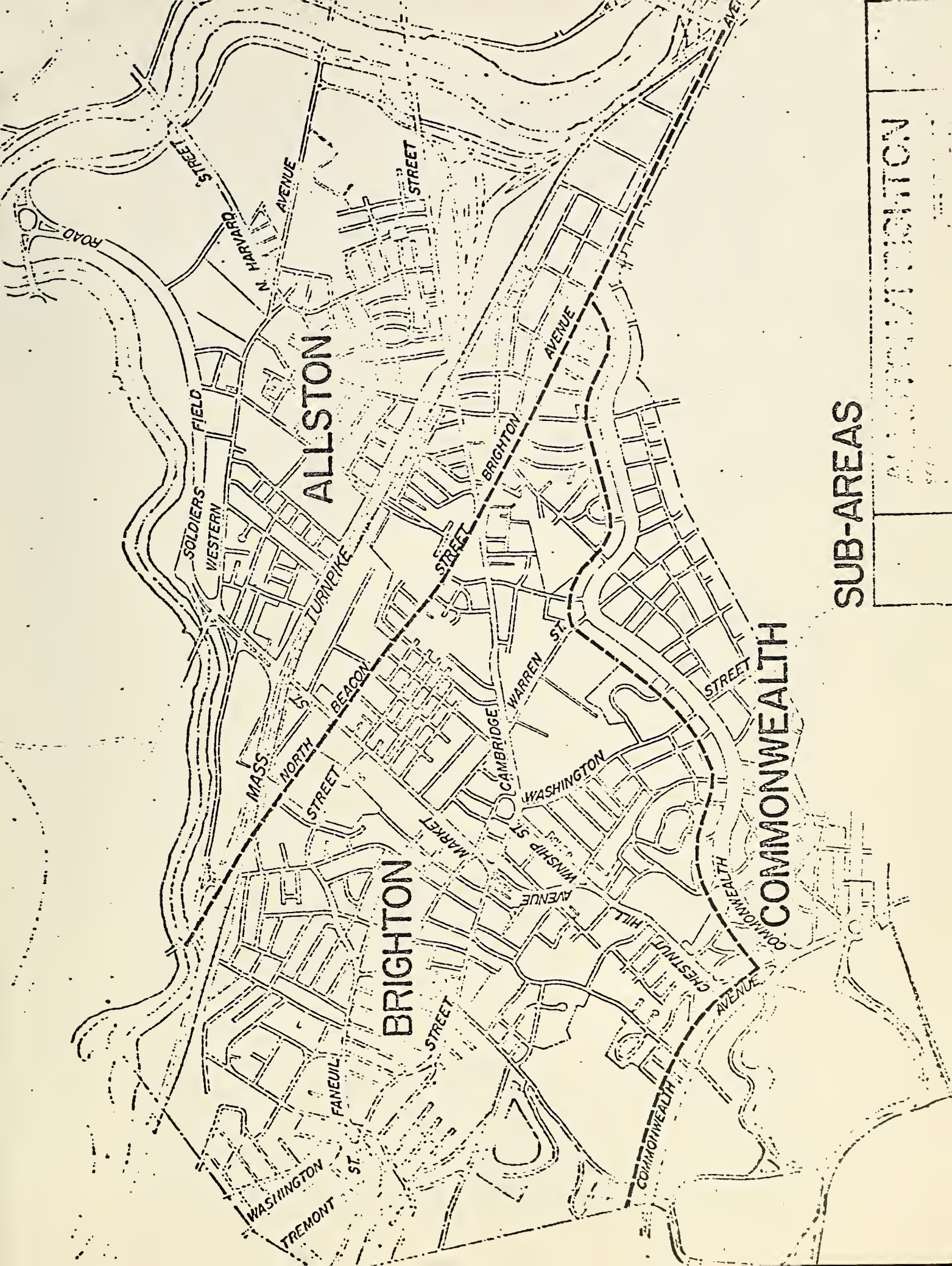
The post-World War II era has brought two dramatic changes to the predominantly family-residential district of Allston-Brighton. First the Massachusetts Turnpike extension was constructed and in effect isolated the Allston community from Brighton. The Turnpike had a more significant negative impact on the community than the Penn Central railroad tracks which had divided the area previously, since the width of the right-of-way, the noise and air pollution were greater than the railroad's and there is no longer the pedestrian underpass which facilitated movement between Allston and Brighton. Secondly the growth of local universities resulted in a considerable influx of students and young working people seeking housing in the district. Although this movement has tapered off since 1970, the effects of population shift are still being felt.

## B. EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS

Information on population and housing in this report is derived from the 1970 U.S. Census. The data for the Allston-Brighton district is available on a sub-area basis and for purposes of analyzing this data, three sub-areas have been designated; Allston, Commonwealth and Brighton. Allston is that section in the north-east bounded on the north and east by the Charles River and on the south and west by Brighton Avenue and North Beacon Street. The Massachusetts Turnpike passes through this section. The Commonwealth sub-area is a narrow expanse to the south including Commonwealth Avenue from Brighton Avenue to Cleveland Circle. The Brighton sub-area extends to the Newton city limits and includes such major street as Cambridge, Washington and Market Streets.







ALLSTON

BRIGHTON

COMMONWEALTH

SUB-AREAS

BOUNDARY DIVISION



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<http://www.archive.org/details/allstonbrightonp75bost>

## ALLSTON

The character of the Allston community has changed considerably because of the influx of students and young working people spilling over from Harvard Square and the concurrent decrease (17%) since 1960 in the number of elderly residents. Families are leaving Allston and the single family homes are being converted to multi-unit structures. This is apparent in the 1970 census data which showed a 19% decrease in the number of housing units with 6-8 rooms and a concurrent 24% increase in the number of units with 1-3 rooms. Although there was a net growth in population of 2% in contrast to a city-wide decrease from 1960-70, the effect of the increase on the viability of Allston as a family residential community is questionable since the increased transient student population and absentee landlords have weakened neighborhood ties. At the same time rents and sales prices have risen substantially. The lack of permanence in the community is evident from the fact that over 62% of the population did not live in the same residence in 1965 as in 1970, compared with 50% for the city as a whole. Although absentee ownership has not in itself caused deterioration in housing, the change in the neighborhood's character tends to discourage owner occupants from further investment in their own property. This explains in part, the high percentage (35%) of homes in Allston requiring rehabilitation in excess of \$1000.

## COMMONWEALTH

The Commonwealth sub-area consists primarily of those structures with five or more units. This sub-area contains 58% of the 5+ units structures in Allston-Brighton. The population is considerably more mobile since 70% have moved since 1965 compared with 62% in Allston and 48% in Brighton. The Commonwealth community experienced a sizable (7%) decrease in overall population from 1960-70, but the number of people aged 20-24 years increased 214% and now represents 30% of the population in the area. Since many of the students and young working people sharing apartments have automobiles, there has been an increase in cars and congestion in spite of the smaller population. The low percentage (4%) of the owner occupied units structures has had a detrimental effect on the appearance of neighborhoods and the sense of community. The life style of some of the young people and that of the elderly who remain is considerably different from that of the families who used to occupy the brick apartment buildings abutting Commonwealth Avenue. There are more people in this area with incomes under \$5000 (21%) than in other sections of Allston-Brighton. Their lower income and different buying patterns have had a strong influence on the kind of retail establishments locating in the area.

## BRIGHTON

Although Brighton, too, has experienced an influx of students and young people since 1960, it has retained its family residential character. Brighton has 74% of the single family structures and 71% of the owner occupied units in the district. The houses in Brighton are generally of wood frame construction and in reasonably good repair with the rate of owner occupancy (27%) on a par with the city as a whole. The population is more stable than that of the rest of the district or the City as a whole since 52% of the





population resided in the same home in 1965 as in 1970. Unlike Allston or Commonwealth, Brighton saw a 43% increase in its elderly population from 1960 to 1970. There was also a substantial increase in the number of Chinese and Spanish speaking people residing in Brighton. Public officials must now consider the special needs of these groups especially in the area of social services and public transportation for the elderly and language assistance for the Chinese and Spanish speaking. Within the Brighton sub-area are four neighborhoods, Aberdeen, Brighton Center, Faneuil and Oak Square each with a distinct type of settlement structural type.



# Comparative Statistics - Allston-Brighton

1970 U.S. Census Data

<u>Population</u>	<u>Allston</u>	<u>Commonwealth</u>	<u>Brighton</u>	<u>District</u>	<u>City</u>
Total 1970	12,403	17,566	33,685	63,657	639,803
Change from '60	2%	-7%	1%	-1%	-8%
Total Black 1970	332	257	905	1,494	104,206
Change from '60	101%	504%	642%	350%	65%
<b>Youth</b>					
15-19 yrs	2016	659	2632	5307	60,900
Change from '60	163%	-10%	22%	45%	17%
20-24 yrs. 1970	2454	5799	4881	13,134	76,958
Change from '60	84%	214%	90%	129%	41%
65 yrs. & over 1970	1043	3305	5330	9678	81,437
Change from '60	-17%	-13%	43%	11%	-5%
<b>Income</b>					
Median Family	9000-11,999	6,000-8,999	9,000-11,999	9626 9,000-11,999	9,000-11,999
% Families under \$5000	18%	21%	16%	17%	22%
<b>Housing</b>					
Total Dwelling Units	3795	9544	11,935	25,324	232,856
Units Needing Fix-up in excess of \$1000	1319	349	1,370	3,038	67,102
Owner Occupied Units	26%	4%	27%	19%	27%
Market Condition	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	Stable
Mobility of Residents People in same house over 5 years -1970	37%	27%	52%	48%	50%





### C. PAST PUBLIC INVESTMENT

Capital expenditures in Allston-Brighton have increased substantially in the last seven years over the previous seven year period. From 1968 to the present, \$9,952,141 was expended in contrast to \$5,447,046 from 1960-67. The major thrust of the capital investment has been toward strengthening neighborhoods through the construction or renovation of community facilities, parks and streets. Although they serve residents outside the district as well, the newly constructed Brighton Branch Library and Boston Business School are assets to the Allston-Brighton community. The renovation of the District 14 Police Station has resulted in that building being an attractive and functional community facility. The City spent \$978,560 in the renovation of playground facilities such as those at Chestnut Hill, McKinney, Ringer, Smith, and Sorrento Playgrounds and Rogers Park. At the same time there were over six miles of street reconstruction, two miles of sidewalk reconstruction and over eight miles of sewer and water work completed.

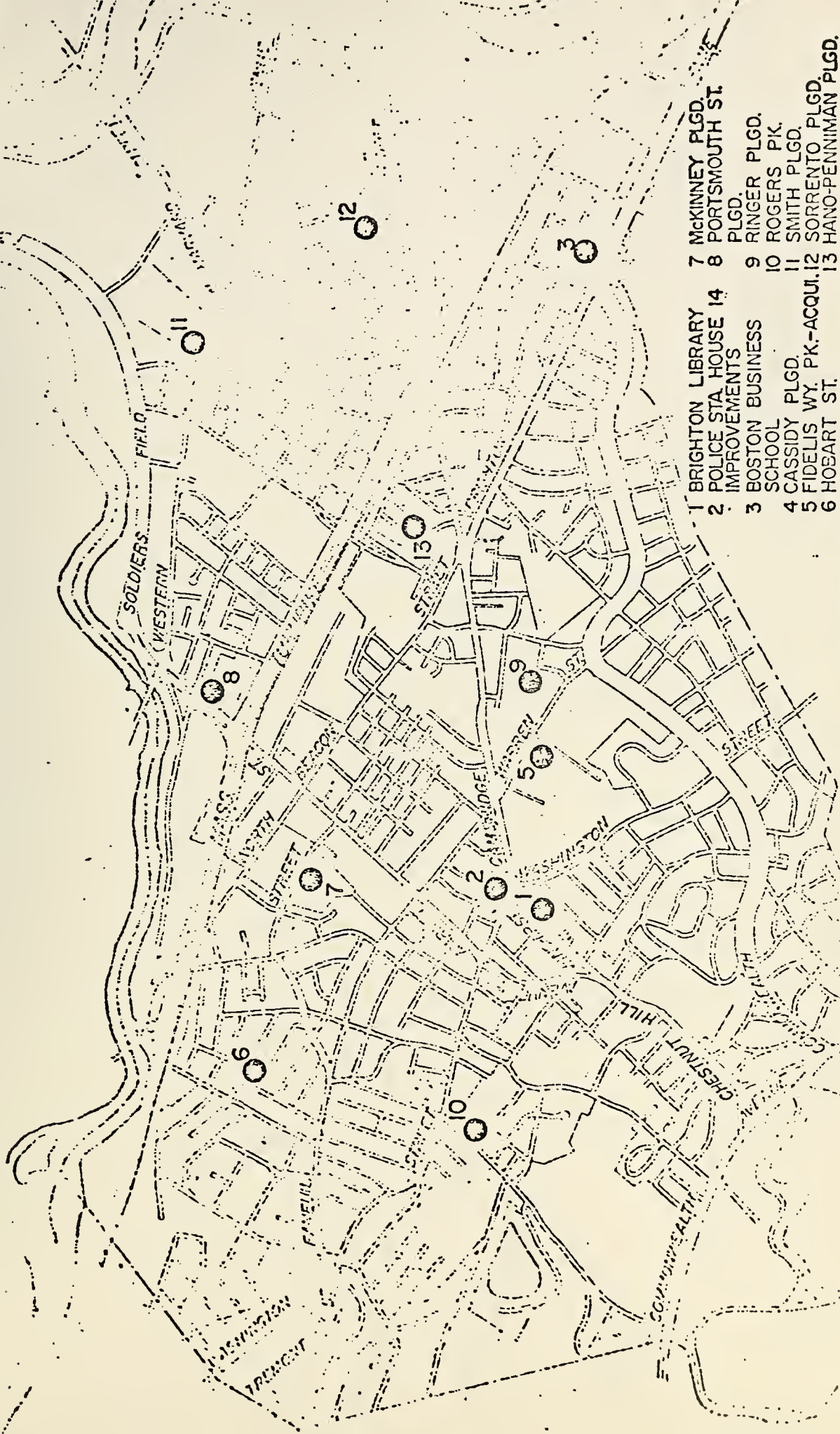
Public effort in housing has been directed in three areas of activity; redevelopment, leased housing and rehabilitation. The Waverly apartments were built on land formerly occupied by a factory and a small construction company thereby demonstrating that industrial land can be reclaimed for residential use. Under the leased housing program the Boston Housing Authority has been able to provide low and moderate income families and individuals with attractive housing. These tend to be concentrated in the Commonwealth Avenue area where there is a substantial number of elderly in need of such assistance and where the owners of buildings know about the existence and requirements of leased housing program. Since September 1973 the Mayor's Housing Improvement Program has encouraged the private rehabilitation of over 140 homes in the district. This program has been instrumental in the preservation of the housing stock by offering tax abatements to homeowners who make the home improvements necessary to comply with the housing code.

### PAST PRIVATE INVESTMENT

A review of building permits for construction activity in excess of \$10,000 from 1968-1974 shows that there has been residential, commercial, industrial and institutional investment in Allston-Brighton. The majority of new construction has been in the form of multi-family residences in the Oak Square area of Brighton while the majority of the residential renovation is in the areas along Commonwealth Avenue. Most of the commercial activity has consisted of alteration of existing buildings.

The industrial investment has not been extensive and is concentrated in the Rugg Road area. Among the most substantial institutional investment were the alterations to Kennedy Hospital, the new St. Elizabeth Hospital, Harvard University's housing and recreational facilities and the campus facilities Boston College.





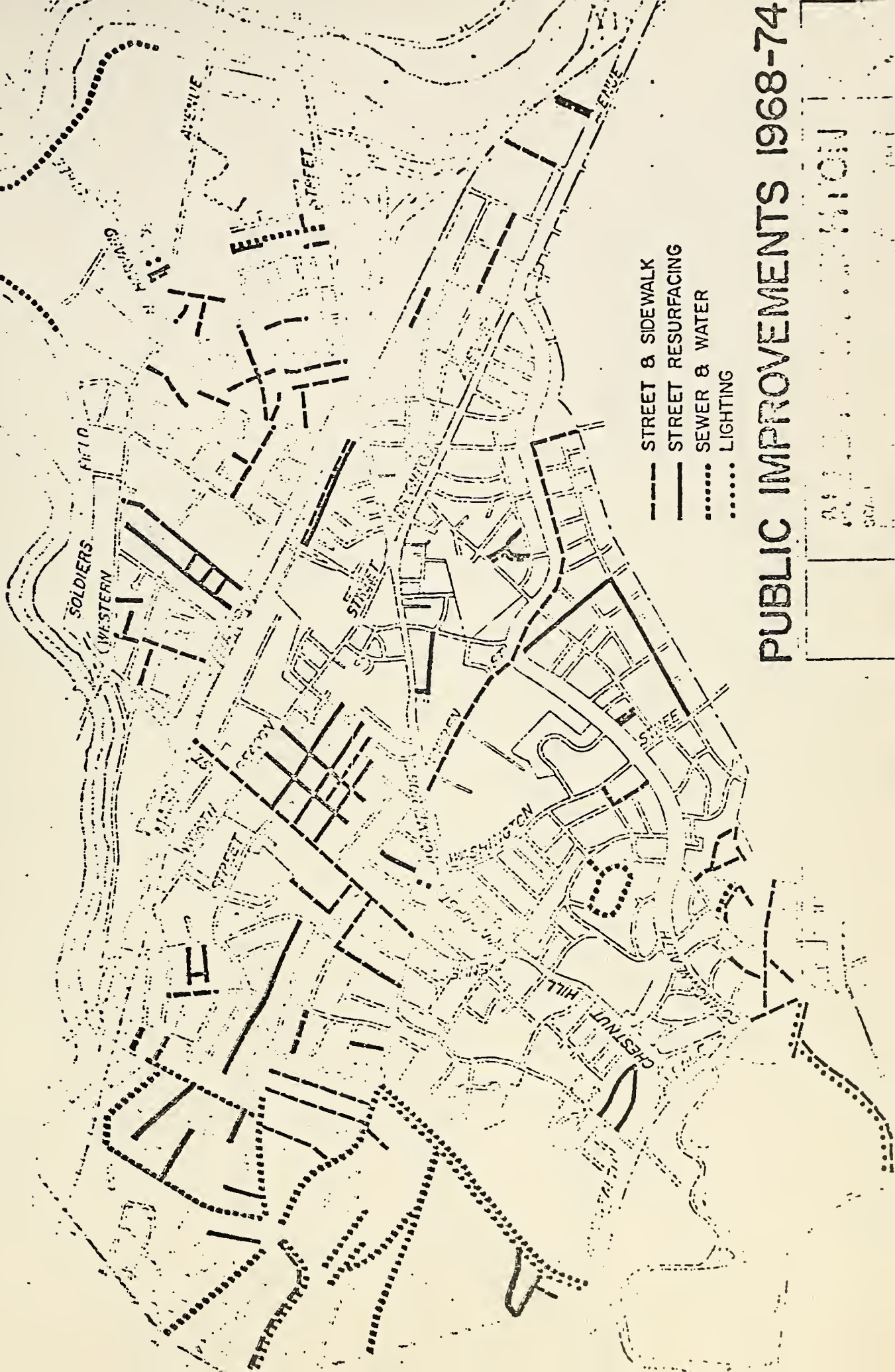
# PUBLIC FACILITIES 1968-74

1 BRIGHTON LIBRARY  
 2 POLICE STA. HOUSE IMPROVEMENTS  
 3 BOSTON BUSINESS SCHOOL  
 4 CASSIDY PLGD.  
 5 FIDELIS WY. PK-ACQUI.  
 6 HOBART ST.  
 7 MCKINNEY PLGD.  
 8 PORTSMOUTH ST. PLGD.  
 9 RINGER PLGD.  
 10 ROGERS PK.  
 11 SMITH PLGD.  
 12 SORRENTO PLGD.  
 13 HANO-PENNIMAN PLGD.

1 BRIGHTON LIBRARY  
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 11 SMITH PLGD.  
 12 SORRENTO PLGD.  
 13 HANO-PENNIMAN PLGD.







- STREET & SIDEWALK
- STREET RESURFACING
- ..... SEWER & WATER
- · — · — LIGHTING

# PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS 1968-74

APPROVED FOR THE CITY OF  
SAN ANTONIO





• LEASED HOUSING (1-4 units)

△ LEASED HOUSING (5-19 units)

△ LEASED HOUSING (20 & over units)

1 CHARLESVIEW (low & moderate income)

2 WAVERLY (low & moderate income)

□ MAYOR'S HOUSING IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

# HOUSING PROGRAMS 1968-74





# PRIVATE INVESTMENT 1968-74

IN EXCESS OF \$10,000

- RENOVATED NEW
- RESIDENTIAL
  - INDUSTRIAL
  - INSTITUTIONAL
  - COMMERCIAL





## **D. ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY STRATEGIES**

### **1. RESIDENTIAL INSTABILITY**

#### **Issue**

Allston-Brighton has traditionally been a family residential district with strong neighborhood ties. However, the proximity of the district to major universities in the area has resulted in a sizable influx of students and more recently young working people seeking housing. The rapidly growing young population has had a substantial impact on the community most noticeably in the form of increased traffic, congestion, noise, spiraling rents, and vandalism. A major issue, therefore, is to determine how to absorb this influx of students and young people in the neighborhood without causing the exodus of families and elderly residents. The latter are either being forced out of the district because of high rents which only groups of unrelated individuals can afford or are discouraged by the apparent decline in the quality of life in the area.

#### **Strategy**

The displacement of families and elderly by students can be reduced through implementation of a program of capital investment and enforcement activity. Strict enforcement of occupancy and parking regulations throughout the district will lessen the impact of the influx of young people. A rigorous code enforcement program in the Commonwealth area might discourage irresponsible landlords from investing in the area. Housing subsidies such as those available under Section 8 would enable existing families and senior citizens to afford the higher rents now being charged in the area. Such programs would also enable property owners in areas such as Oak Square to make improvements to their buildings which they otherwise have been unable to afford because of the rent structure. Capital investment in streets, sidewalks, lighting, and parks would make the area attractive to homebuyers.

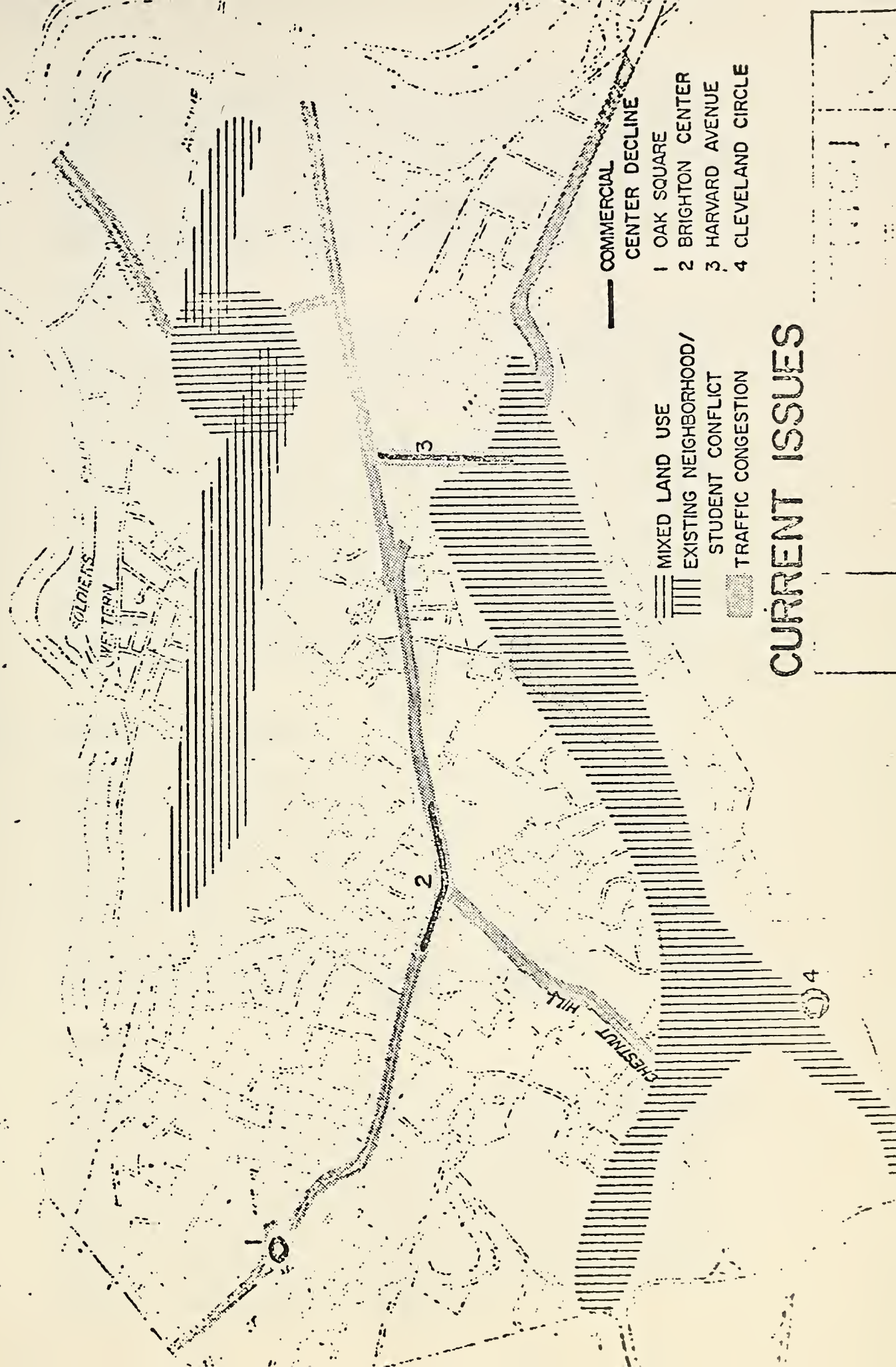
Lending institutions must be encouraged to provide mortgage assistance to families seeking home ownership in Allston-Brighton and civic groups should meet to discuss this. The continuation of the Mayor's Housing Improvement Program should generate confidence in the future of this area as a residential neighborhood. The senior citizen housing complex on Ccrey Road, and the improvement to parks and playgrounds in the district scheduled for 1975 will also have a positive effect on the neighborhood's stability.

### **2. COMMERCIAL CENTER DECLINE**

#### **Issues**

The decline of neighborhood shopping areas in Allston-Brighton is not unusual in the era of "one-stop" shopping at large outlying chain stores. The convenience of ample free parking at chain stores and variety of merchandise available in regional shopping centers make these facilities more attractive to those with automobiles.





- COMMERCIAL
- CENTER DECLINE
- 1 OAK SQUARE
- 2 BRIGHTON CENTER
- 3 HARVARD AVENUE
- 4 CLEVELAND CIRCLE

- MIXED LAND USE
- EXISTING NEIGHBORHOOD/  
STUDENT CONFLICT
- TRAFFIC CONGESTION

# CURRENT ISSUES

1000





The need for neighborhood shopping especially for the elderly requires that these be upgraded and a balance of stores be provided offering the basic goods, and services as well as those facilities serving the entertainment of the young people.

A central issue is how to make the neighborhood shopping centers competitive with outlying stores so that residents have necessary shops and services close at hand.

### Strategy

Both public and private effort is required to enable neighborhood shopping areas to compete with larger suburban centers. More street lighting, street furniture and off-street parking lots will create a more attractive and convenient shopping environment on Harvard Avenue and at Brighton Center. Similarly, additional police protection and street sweeping will encourage shoppers to use neighborhood facilities. The City should assist associations of businessmen in setting up workshops and advising on such matters as storefront rehabilitation. Since a broader mix of stores is sought in Allston-Brighton, public policy should be used to strengthen existing stores so that more merchants will be attracted to neighborhoods. This can be effected through public improvements and incentives for storefront rehabilitation. The off-street parking lot to be constructed on Harvard Avenue this year is a significant step by the City to improve a neighborhood center.

## 3. INDUSTRIAL ENCROACHMENT

Although Allston-Brighton contains about 10% of the land in the city which is used for industry, it is not efficiently used and the industrial area is deteriorating because of obsolescence brought about by changing technology and poor access. Industries have and continue to expand in a haphazard pattern by means of individual variances. As a result surrounding residential areas are experiencing increased truck traffic, congesting and air pollution. An issue of increasing importance to Allston-Brighton is how to ensure the viability of industrial firms without adversely affecting the quality of life in adjacent residential neighborhoods.

### Strategy

A study of the industrial areas in the district should be prepared and proposals for rezoning set forth which if adopted, should encourage intensified industrial activity within definite zones. Greater density, road improvements to provide easier access and private modernization efforts would contribute to the viability of the industrial firms thereby encouraging the continuation of job opportunities in the district. The study and recommended rezoning would provide for a distinct buffer between areas for industrial and residential land use. This will protect the property values and land use as well as the residential neighborhood.





#### 4. TRAFFIC CONGESTION AND INADEQUATE PARKING

##### Issue

Many streets in Allston-Brighton were originally constructed for local and not through traffic use. Heavy traffic and deferred maintenance have left the arterials in bad condition. The few continuous streets which do exist are not wide enough especially because of the curbside parking resulting from the lack of off-street parking lots. Insufficient traffic control intensifies congestion at many intersections.

Public transportation is adequate for those travelling east and west, who may use the MBTA "Green Line" trolley or buses. However, there is limited service available on a north-south axis. This hinders many elderly residents from utilizing various social services available in the district.

A central issue becomes how to improve traffic flow on the existing unplanned network of streets.

##### Strategy

The problem of traffic congestion requires a multi-faceted approach. A review of the existing circulation plan should be prepared in which the functions of certain congested streets are reviewed and alternative circulation proposals are considered. Cambridge Street, Washington Street, North Harvard Street, Harvard Avenue, and the Sparhawk and Warren intersection are particular problem areas requiring improvement. The physical condition of the streets requires resurfacing or reconstruction. Traffic signalization is necessary with interconnecting signals on major streets. Towing illegally parked cars and the enforcement of the resident parking sticker program would address the problem of double parking which presently impedes traffic flow. The Brighton Mini-Bus which was intended to meet special transportation needs is not operating effectively and requires review and modifications.

The TOPICS work on Commonwealth Avenue and on Washington and Cambridge Streets included in the 1975 investment program will begin to address the issue of traffic congestion while the congestion on Harvard Avenue should be remedied in part with the construction of the off-street parking lot.

#### 5. SCARCITY OF SOCIAL SERVICES

##### Issues

As the character of the population has changed in Allston-Brighton, there has developed a growing need for a variety of social services. This need is felt by the new residents as well as those who have resided in the community for many years and results in part from changing life styles and the decline in the national economic conditions. More senior citizens are living alone today away from their families who traditionally



have provided them with needed services. There are more women working to supplement the family income who need day care facilities for their young children. Teenagers who have rejected conventional recreation programs want stimulating extracurricular activity and in some cases guidance and counselling.

### Strategy

In order to maximize the effectiveness of existing social service in the district it is necessary first to catalogue those services available and identify both the providers, public and private, and the service areas. These services should be evaluated systematically and the demand for additional kinds of services should be considered. Community input will be essential in this process. Through the compilation of this information, the costly duplication of services could be eliminated and a comprehensive referral system could be implemented so that residents are made aware of services presently available. Those needs for which there are no services should be identified so that if funds become available in the future, there will be no need for a long lead time before implementation of new programs. The community participation in this identification of needs and services will be instrumental in generating citizen awareness and involvement in the planning process. In addition, the process of cataloging services may promote interaction among service providers which has been lacking in the past. With the comprehensive study of needs and services prepared, providers will be able to make more informed decisions about which services to provide and which of the current services are inefficient or ineffective. In this way there may be a more effective allocation of scarce resources than presently exists.



## E. 1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM

The 1975 Program is geared to three areas: housing, neighborhood business districts and capital improvements. The Mayor's Housing Improvement Program, which provides incentives for rehabilitation of 1-6 unit dwellings, will be expanded to include the entire district and a special homeowner's security program will be implemented to advise residents on deterring thieves and to assist them in putting indelible identification labels on their possessions. The elderly housing development on Washington Street and Corey Road, a Boston Housing Authority turnkey project, will provide 225 units of housing. Effort toward commercial center revitalization includes construction of an off-street parking lot on Harvard Avenue, the installation of trash receptacles and benches on Harvard Avenue and sodium vapor lighting on Harvard Avenue and Brighton Center.

The TOPICS program work on Cambridge and Washington Streets should improve roadways at Union Square and Oak Square and thereby ease some of the traffic congestion at those centers.

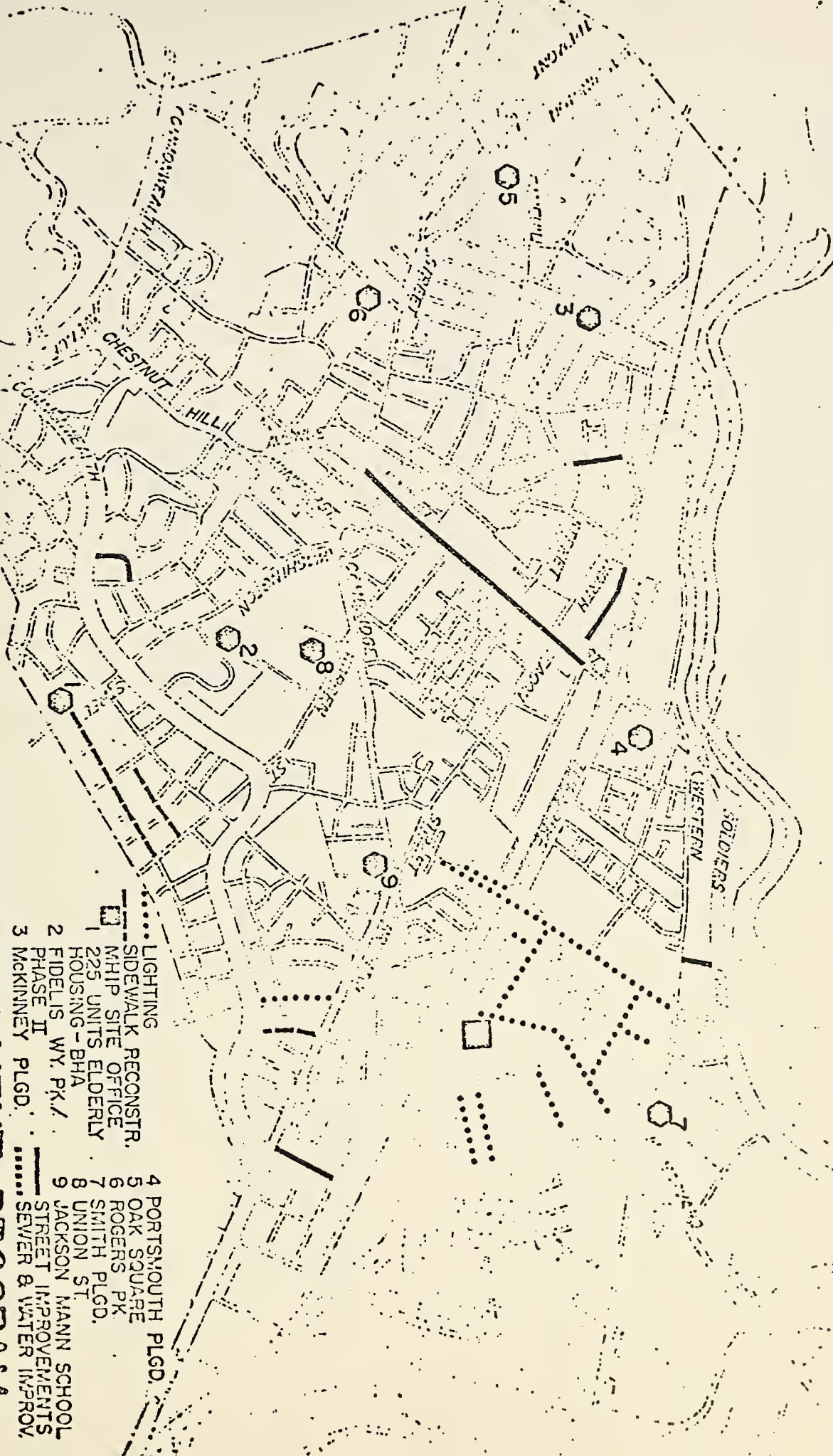
The City's capital investment in the district includes the completion of the new Jackson-Mann Elementary and Special School, the construction of a new fire station, the renovation of the Brighton Municipal Building, and the development of park and playground facilities at Fidelis Way and Rogers Parks, McKinney, Portsmouth, Oak Square, Smith and Union Street Playgrounds. In addition, there is money allocated for tree planting, street lights and sidewalk reconstruction.





# 1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM

- ..... LIGHTING
- SIDEWALK RECONSTR.
- WHIP SITE OFFICE
- 225 UNITS ELDERLY HOUSING - BHA
- 2 FIDELIS WY. PK./
- PHASE II
- 3 MCKINNEY PLGD.
- 4 PORTSMOUTH PLGD.
- 5 OAK SQUARE
- 6 ROGERS PK.
- 7 SMITH PLGD.
- 8 UNION ST.
- 9 JACKSON MANN SCHOOL
- STREET IMPROVEMENTS
- ..... SEWER & WATER IMPROV.







F. FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs	Yearly Planning Work Program
Residential Instability	Preservation of Stock	MHIP - \$150,000	MHIP - minimum 250 units per year	Assist MHIP in designation of program area
	Code Enforcement		Provide staff support for code enforcement	Catalogue over occupancy
	Stabilization of neighborhood mortgage assistance.			Work with banks to encourage assistance to families in area.
	neighborhood associations			Work with residents to reinforce sense of neighborhood
	maintenance of vacant lots	-	Purchase vacant lots	Locate sites for vest pocket residential parking lots
	Capital Expenditure to strengthen neighborhood e.g schools, parks	Jackson-Mann Elementary School - \$12,550,000		
			Union Square Fire Station Allston Branch Library	Study site alternatives or rehabilitation of existing site Allston Branch Library
		Fidelis May Park II - \$400,000 McKinney Playgd. - 60,000 Portsmouth " - 80,000 Oak Square " - 70,000 Rogers Park - 100,000 South Playgd. - 270,000 Union Street Playgd. - 106,000	Ringer Playground Renovation Upgrading of Squares and monuments	Work with civic group to catalogue park needs
			Water and sewer reconstruction	Catalogue water and sewer needs



F. FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program (cont'd)

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs	Yearly Planning Work Program
Instability (cont'd)	New Construction	225 units - Turnkey Washington Corey Road \$6,878,000	New Housing Development	Work with Washington Corey citizens' group
				Work with developers of various housing proposals Oak Square, Combined Jewish Philanthropies, Reservoir Towers
Commercial Center Decline	Private Effort: organize businessmen storefront rehab			
	Public Effort: improve lighting	part of \$250,000 lighting program		review lighting plan
	improve City services e.g. trash barrels		Oak Square Union Squares Cleveland Circle	Survey service and facility needs in Oak Square Union Square and Cleveland Circle
	reduce traffic congestion - parking lots	\$485,000 Parking Lot Harvard Avenue	Brighton Center Municipal Parking Lot Renovation	
	control billboards and signs		Harvard Avenue (East) Parking Lot	
	provide street furniture	street furniture \$25,000	Additional street furniture in Union Square, Center	Work with merchants to determine placement of street furniture
	Joint Effort: Market study to direct revitalization effort			Market Study - shopper survey obtain data and analyze



F. FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program (cont'd)

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs	Yearly Planning Work Program
Commercial Center Decline (cont'd)	Work with merchants SBA Workshop			Work with Union Square merchants to provide off-street parking on private property Coordinate SBA workshops
Industrial Encroachment	Prepare study of industrial areas			Begin study of industrial areas Update land use map of industrial area Work with EDIC in study of problems and resources in the area
	Control individual variances granted			
Traffic Congestion	Roadway Transportation Patch paving and reconstruction Signalization Interconnection Pedestrian signals	TOPICS \$1,300,000 Washington St., Commonwealth, Cleveland Circle	Urban Systems project Washington-Cambridge Brighton Ave. Signals and road reconstruction Everett St. Bridge Ramp Reconstruction	Prepare scope of services report for Urban Systems application Catalogue street improvements needed in district Review Brighton minibus operation
	Lighting	Part of \$250,000 light program		
	Public Transportation Restore Watertown trolley			





F. FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program (cont'd)

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs	Yearly Planning Work Program
Scarcity of Social	Prepare comprehensive review of service available		Day Care Center Support Teen Counselling Services Elderly Assistance-Transportation, home maintenance	Work with service providers to determine areas of service and needs  Meet with community groups to discuss needs and services now provided  Assist in finding alternate source of funding for those programs which may be terminated

